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ABSTRACT

In 1975, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges conducted a national survey of humanities faculty in two-year colleges. This paper summarizes the characteristics of 70 philosophy instructors included in the total sample of 1,493 full- and part-time faculty. Findings of the survey include: (1) males dominated this field (84%) and 100% reported that they were white/Caucasian; (2) one-third had been administrators or instructors in secondary schools while half had been administrators or instructors in a four-year college or university; (3) 31% claimed to be working on the doctorate, most already possessing the master's; (4) 36% neither subscribed to nor read journals within their discipline, while 77% neither subscribed to nor read professional education journals; (5) philosophy instructors rated what they are presently doing as "very attractive" and second only to a faculty position at a four-year college or university; (6) over 90% had not presented papers at regional or national meetings, while over half had not attended such meetings in the three years prior to the survey; and (7) philosophy instructors rated preparation for further formal education as the most important function of a two-year college education. For the full survey report, see ED 121 358. (JDS)

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A PROFILE OF PHILOSOPHY INSTRUCTORS IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

In an attempt to redress an imbalance between a plethora of material on teacher characteristics in general and a paucity of data about people in specific disciplines, a nationwide study was conducted of 1493 people teaching the humanities in 156 carefully selected community/junior colleges. This faculty sample was drawn to include both full- and part-time instructors who teach in one of eleven disciplinary areas defined as comprising the humanities--art, anthropology, foreign language, history, law/government, liberal arts/drama, literature, music, philosophy, religious studies, and social science. Conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the project revealed demographic information as well as data about such variables as attitudes toward students and the humanities, satisfaction, reference groups, and professional affiliation.

In this sample of 1493 people, philosophy instructors constitute one of the smaller groups--70 people or 5% of the total. Despite this small population, however, the careful way in which the sample was drawn suggests that the data are generalizable to a much larger population base. Some of these data are presented here in response to such questions as the number of hours instructors spend teaching, the fields in which their highest degrees are held, and the proportions of males and females and full/part-time faculty.

Diversity among the sample is expressed in part by the highest degrees held. While 69%* pointed to degrees in philosophy, 17% held their highest degree in religious studies, 14% in literature, 10% in education, and 7% in history. Twenty-one percent of these instructors had been students in community colleges.

Males outnumber females two to one in the total sample and philosophy is still higher with 84% males. These instructors spread fairly evenly across all age groups. The mode is 41-45, followed by 31-35, 46-50, 56-60, 26-30, 36-40, 51-55, and 61 or older. One hundred percent of the philosophers claim to be white/Caucasian, a total equalled only by the religious studies people in our sample.

Experience

One-third of these philosophy people had been instructors or

*All figures are rounded.

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administrators in secondary schools, 14% claiming 5-10 years. And half reported they had been engaged as administrators or instructors in a four-year college or university beyond the level of teaching or research assistant. In fact, they represent the second largest group with such experience, following the religious studies people. Within any two-year college, 33% claimed 5-10 years as instructors and/or administrators and 21%, 11-20 years. Sixteen percent had worked less than one year in their current institution (10% total); 36%, 5-10 years (42% total); and 20%, 11-20 years (15% total).

Chairpersons

One-fourth had had no experience as chairpersons of departments or divisions, and about half of these philosophers were acting in this capacity at the time they were queried through our Faculty Survey. Two-thirds reported they had employed people holding the doctorate but over ten percent (more than any other discipline other than law/government) said that as chairpersons they had been pressured from administrators to not hire people holding the doctorate. Thus it is not surprising that only 45% said they planned to hire people with this advanced degree, the lowest proportion of all disciplines. About one-fourth reported that they would hire the best person regardless of degree, that people with doctorates are more capable/knowledgeable, or that they are the best qualified personnel.

Teaching Hours; Full-Time/Part-Time

In terms of their weekly class hours, philosophy instructors are similar to their counterparts in other fields. About one-third teach 13-15 hours weekly, followed by 10-12 hours for 19%. Yet 16% teach 3 hours or less, following only the religious studies people and as compared with 9% of the total sample.

Over two-thirds of the philosophy instructors reported that they are full-time faculty members, as compared with three-fourths of the total sample. Employed at jobs in addition to their teaching at the sampled institution are 30% of the philosophy people and 26% of the total population. Most of these claim to be working 1-10 hours weekly, followed by 11-20 and then 31-40 hours.

Reference Groups

The way one perceives various groups as sources of advice on teaching is a clue to his/her role models. In their first three choices as "quite useful" reference groups, philosophy instructors are exactly like the total population, ranking, in order, colleagues, students, and department chairpersons. In fourth place (fifth for total) are university

professors, followed by professional journals (fourth for total). In sixth, seventh, and eighth place for both groups are programs of professional organizations, high school teachers, and administrators.

Professional Journals

More than faculty in any other field, two-year college philosophy instructors are inclined to shun scholarly disciplinary journals, 36% reporting they neither subscribe to nor read such journals. With professional education journals, more philosophers (77%; 64% total) also report "none" but when it comes to journals or magazines of general interest, several disciplinary groups lead philosophy in claiming "none."

Professional Development

Although few philosophy instructors are working on the master's degree (most already possessing this degree), 31% (24% total) claim to be working on the doctorate. And nearly all (83%) say they would like to take steps toward professional development in the next five years. As to what steps, the choices of the philosophy instructors are in accord with the total sample, with about one-third reporting they would like to enroll in courses in a university. About half the philosophy instructors and one-third of the total suggest they would like to get a Ph.D. or Ed.D., and 9% philosophy, 9% total, enroll in in-service courses at their colleges.

When queried about activities during a free summer, philosophy instructors fall considerably behind the total group in terms of offering "travel" as a choice, 34% (53% total) so responding. Combinations of meeting classes/doing research/engaging in workshops are frequently cited (56% philosophy, 42% total) as are taking classes/studying/reading, recreaction/rest, writing for publication, and doing research.

Were they again to seek training before starting to teach, exactly half of the philosophers (33% total) report they would do the same/change nothing. This could be interpreted as indicating greater satisfaction among philosphy instructors than any other disciplinary group.

Five Years Hence

Satisfaction is also suggested by responses to one item asking faculty members what they would like to be doing five years hence. Doing what they are presently doing is suggested first as "very attractive" by the philosophy instructors and second by the total group. In order of importance, philosophy people next choose a faculty position

at a four-year college or university, a faculty position at another community or junior college, a school outside the United States, a non-teaching, non-academic position, an administrative position in a community or junior college, a position in a professional association, any position but one at their college, and, last, "have no idea."

Affiliation

In regards to membership in professional associations, philosophers are at the median, with about one-fourth indicating no membership. In the three years previous to responding to the Faculty Survey, over half said they had attended no regional or national meetings. Even fewer people presented papers--in fact, over 90% of both philosophy and total respondents indicated no such presentations.

Another indicator of affiliation is a group cohesion score wherein respondents perceive themselves in relationship to certain key groups. In this respect, philosophy instructors are not too different from their colleagues in other fields in the way they rank-order their relationships with those significant others who are offered as choices. At the same time, while the patterning is close, their mean affiliation scores fall somewhat below the total group. In order of affiliation, philosophy instructors rank friends, most instructors at their school, other instructors in their field, family, students, college administrators, and teacher organizations.

Students

When asked to rate the qualities they feel students should gain from a two-year college education, philosophy people differ from the total group in all but one instance. In order of preference, they rate as "very important" preparation for further formal education, self-knowledge/personal identity, knowledge of and interest in community and world problems, knowledge and skills directly applicable to their careers, aesthetic awareness, and last for both groups, an understanding and mastery of some academic discipline.

But they rank in much the same manner as the other disciplines the number of humanities courses they think students in two-year occupational programs should be required to take. In order of choice, these are six or more, four, three, five and two tied, none, and one. And when it comes to humanities activities in other than course-related presentations, once more philosophy instructors agree with the total group, this time finding colloquiums and seminars particularly lacking. Although they also find lectures "too few" they rate all other choices offered as more sufficient than few--exhibits, concerts and recitals, and films.

Experiences and Curriculum

When asked how they experience the humanities other than through their actual teaching, philosophers first cite reading, followed by visiting art museums/attending shows/exhibits/concerts/theatre and films. They next rank everyday experiences, then talking with peers and associates and attending classes/lectures/seminars.

As for changes that had occurred in humanities instruction at their colleges in the past seven years, philosophy instructors are in accord with all other groups by designating added/improved humanities courses. This is also the change that 24% (about one-fourth total) suggest they would like to see effected, followed by integrating humanities into interdisciplinary courses (16% philosophy, 14% total).

The Colleges

Almost all of the philosophy instructors (91%) in our sample teach in public colleges that are comprehensive, built chiefly in 1959 or earlier, followed by 1960-1969. The largest clustering of instructors in this discipline is in schools of 2500-7499, followed by 15,000 and larger, and 5000-7499. Single campus colleges account for 61% of the philosophy people (70% total), multi-campus--34% philosophy and 26% total, and two-year divisions of four-year colleges, 4% philosophy and 5% total.

In Sum

As with the other disciplinary groups, philosophy claims instructors who are preponderantly like instructors in other fields but who also differ in certain variables. More males dominate this field and all are white/Caucasians. A sizeable number had spent time as instructors or administrators in four-year colleges and universities while few had had such experiences at the secondary school level. They tend not to subscribe to and/or read journals within their discipline or professional education journals. A sizeable number claim to be working on their doctorate and many seem to be satisfied with continuing their present work five years hence.

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